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On Campus with Max Shulman

(Author of "Rally Round The Flag, Boys", "The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis", etc.)

SHAKESPEARE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANY MORE

A recent and most heartening development in American college life has been the emergence of the artist-in-residence. In fact, the artist-in-residence has become as familiar a sight on campus as Latin ponies, leather elbow patches, Rorschach tests, hula hoops, and Marlboro cigarettes.

And we all know how familiar *that* is—I mean Marlboro cigarettes. And why should it not be familiar? Why, where learning is king, where taste is sovereign, where brain power rules supreme, should not Marlboro be everyone's favorite? The same good sense that gets you through an exam in Restoration Poetry or solid-state physics certainly does not desert you when you come to pick a cigarette. You look for a flavor that is flavorful, a filter pure and white, a choice of pack or box, a lot to like. You look, in short, for Marlboro—and happily you don't have to look far. Marlboro is available at your friendly tobacconist's or vending machine, wherever cigarettes are sold in all fifty states and Las Vegas.

But I digress. We were speaking of the new campus phenomenon—the artist-in-residence—a man or woman who writes, paints, or composes right on your very own campus and who is also available for occasional consultations with superior students.

Take, for example, William Cullen Sigafoos, artist-in-residence at the Toledo College of Belles Lettres and Fingerprint Identification.

As we all know, Mr. Sigafoos has been working for many years on an epic poem in rhymed couplets about the opening of the Youngstown-Akron highway. Until, however, he went into residence at the Toledo College of Belles Lettres and Fingerprint Identification, his progress was not what you would call rapid. He started well enough with the immortal couplet we all know: *They speed along on wheels of rubber, rushing home in time for supper . . .*

Then Mr. Sigafoos got stuck. It is not that his muse deserted him; it is that he became involved in a series of time-consuming episodes—a prefrontal lobotomy for Irwin, his faithful sled dog; fourteen consecutive months of jury duty on a very complicated case of overtime parking; getting his coattail caught in the door of a jet bound for Brisbane, Australia; stuff like that.

He was engaged in a very arduous job in Sandusky—posing for a sculptor of hydrants—when an offer came from the Toledo College of Belles Lettres and Fingerprint Identification to take up residence there, finish his *magnum opus* and, from time to time, see a few gifted students.

Mr. Sigafoos accepted with pleasure and in three short years completed the second couplet of his Youngstown-Akron Turnpike epic: *The highway is made of solid concrete and at the toll station you get a receipt.*

"What is truth?" said one.

Then a few gifted students came to visit him. They were a prepossessing lot—the boys with corduroy jackets and long, shaggy beards; the girls also with corduroy jackets but with beards neatly braided.

"What is truth?" said one. "What is beauty?" said another.

"Should a writer live first and write later or should he write and do a little living in his spare time?" said another.

"How do you find happiness—and having found it, how do you get rid of it?" said another.

"Whither are we drifting?" said another.

"I don't know whither you are drifting," said Mr. Sigafoos, "but as for me, I am drifting back to Sandusky to pose for the hydrant sculptor."

And back he went, alas, leaving only a fragment of his Youngstown-Akron Turnpike epic to rank with other such uncompleted masterpieces as Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, the Venus de Milo, and Singer's Midgets.

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Take cheer, good friends, from one masterpiece that is complete. We, refer, of course, to Marlboro cigarettes. Filter end and tobacco end are both as good as tobacco artistry and science can make them.

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